

Fact Sheet #2



John Day Vapor Response

John Day, Oregon

Sunday, May 24, 2015

An EPA Emergency Response Team has been helping the City of John Day and the State of Oregon investigate unusual odors in and around homes and commercial buildings along South Canyon Boulevard and SW Brent Street between SW 2nd Avenue and SW 6th Avenue.

Since May 21, EPA crews have been going door to door to take indoor air readings. Most homes did not have fumes that would cause concern for the occupants. However, there are a number of homes where we found levels of fumes that could potentially cause health concerns for residents. We plan to meet with each of these home owners individually to discuss their results and talk about precautionary measures that should be taken to minimize the fumes in their residence.

What precautionary measures can help?

Some residents have reduced fumes by taking some or all of the follow actions:

- Ventilate! Ventilation is still the most important measure that can be taken to get rid of fumes. Leave windows open for air flow. Create a cross draft by opening to two windows and placing an outward facing fan in one of them.
- Fill in cracks or holes cracks in cement basement floors with products foam sealer.
- Put down a vapor barrier in crawl spaces where fumes might come up from the ground. Black plastic is one easily available option.
- Limit your time in any room where you smell an unusual odor.

Was every home in the neighborhood checked for fumes?

EPA did not enter vacant houses and we were not able to check residences where residents were out of town for the holiday weekend.

What are the fumes?

We know that the fumes, at a minimum, contain a group of chemicals called Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). A preliminary sampling report is available on the City of John Day website: <http://www.cityofjohnday.com/>. Additional samples are being collected by EPA to help identify any additional chemicals of concern. These samples are sent to a laboratory for analysis and the results will be available in about a week.

What level of VOCs are a cause for concern here in south John Day?

We are working with any residence with total volatile organic compounds exceeding 5,000 parts per billion.

What happens next?

Once laboratory results are received, we will have a better understanding of measures residents can take to maintain a home safe from fumes.

We believe the fumes are moving through groundwater. We don't know the exact source yet. We hope the information we get back from the laboratory will get us closer to understanding the cause.

EPA is working with the City of John Day and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to determine what the next steps are and who will be involved.

What Do I Do If I Smell Fumes in My House?

If you smell an unusual odor in your house please call City of John Day Dispatch at 541-575-0030. You may also want to contact your insurance provider to discuss any concerns arising from household fumes.

Who Do I Contact for More Information?

Judy Smith, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, 503-545-2540